# This Page Is Inserted by IFW Operations and is not a part of the Official Record

## **BEST AVAILABLE IMAGES**

Defective images within this document are accurate representations of the original documents submitted by the applicant.

Defects in the images may include (but are not limited to):

- BLACK BORDERS
- TEXT CUT OFF AT TOP, BOTTOM OR SIDES
- FADED TEXT
- ILLEGIBLE TEXT
- SKEWED/SLANTED IMAGES
- COLORED PHOTOS
- BLACK OR VERY BLACK AND WHITE DARK PHOTOS
- GRAY SCALE DOCUMENTS

# IMAGES ARE BEST AVAILABLE COPY.

As rescanning documents will not correct images, please do not report the images to the Image Problem Mailbox.

#### (19) 日本国特許庁(JP)

### (12) 実用新案公報(Y2)

(11) 実用新案出願公告番号

## **実公平8-7637**

(24) (44)公告日 平成8年(1996) 3月4日

(51) Int.Cl.	識別配号	庁内整理番号	FΙ		技術表示箇所
H01L 21/68 B65D 85/00 85/86	00 H	0330-3E			
,		0330-3E	B65D H01L	· ·	最終頁に続く
(21)出顯番号	実験平4-60861		(71)出願人	000140890 株式会社柿崎製作所	
(22)出顧日	, ,,,, = , (1002) 0 ,	月31日	(72)考案者	**	
(65)公開番号 (43)公開日	実 <b>興平6-26263</b> 平成6年(1994) 4)	月8日	(7.4) (P.OH A	東京都豊島区西池袋1丁目1 会社柿崎製作所内 弁理士 工膳 宜幸 (外2	
				豊永 茂弘	<b>41</b> 37
			(56)参考文献	ポー特期 平2-209746 (JI 実開 昭61-175614 (JI	

#### (54) 【考案の名称】 薄板用支持容器

#### 【実用新案登録請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 円盤状の薄板を多段にかつ等間隔に支持すべく多数のリブ片を多段に配設した支持用リブを並列に相対向して備え、一方の閉口部が前記薄板を導入又は導出させる導入出口となる薄板用支持容器において、前記リブ片を、前記薄板の導入又は導出が容易なように、その全長に亘って肉薄に成形してリブ片間隔を広くし、内部に挿入された薄板の重心を通るその導入、導出方向に直交する直線が前記相対向して備えられた各支持用リブと交わる点より前記導入出口側の当該リブ片位置に、内部に挿入された薄板を下側から支持する支持用凸部を設けると共に、前記リブ片の最奥側に、薄板の挿入限度を規制すると共に薄板を奥側から支持する奥側支持部を設け、

前記薄板が奥側支持部に当接して限度位置まで挿入され

た状態で、この奥側支持部と前記支持用凸部とで薄板を 水平に支持することを特徴とする薄板用支持容器。

#### 【考案の詳細な説明】

[0001]

【産業上の利用分野】本考案は、半導体ウエハ等の薄板を複数枚等間隔をおいて多段に収納支持し、保管、運搬、洗浄、エッチング及び乾燥等の処理を複数枚まとめて行う薄板用支持容器に関する。

[0002]

【従来の技術】薄板を複数枚同時に収納支持して保管、洗浄、エッチング等の処理を行う薄板用支持容器としては、例えば薄板として半導体ウエハを用いた半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス1が知られている。この半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス1を図2に基づいて説明する。図2は半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス1の対向する一

対の側板の一方のみを内側から示す一部破断斜視図である。

【0003】半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス1は、一方を開口して構成され、ウエハ7(図4参照)を導入及び導出するウエハ導入出口2Aを有する筐体2と、この筐体2の互いに対向した2枚の側板3の内側面にそれぞれ多段に設けられ、複数枚のウエハ7を並列にかつ多段に収納支持する支持用リブ5とから概略構成されている。

【0004】各支持用リブ5は、側板3に一定間隔をおいて並列に設けられた多数のリブ片5Aから構成されている。このリブ片5Aは断面形状を肉薄に成形され、隣り合うリブ片5Aの間隔を大きく取ってある。

【0005】各支持用リブ5の最奥部には互いに内側へ向け湾曲させて成形された最奥支持部5日が設けられ、 挿入されたウエハ7の挿入限度を規制し位置決めをする ようになっている。

【0006】筐体2の一側面(図2中の左側面)には、この筐体2を縦(内部に挿入されたウエハ7を水平に支持する状態)に置いたときに、内部に挿入されたウエハ7が水平になるように筐体2を支持する水平支持板部6が設けられている。

【0007】以上の構成の従来の半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス1にあっては、複数のウエハフを並列にかつ 多段に支持して、これら複数のウエハフをボックス1ご と洗浄液に浸ける洗浄処理等を行う。

【0008】そして、この半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス1へのウエハ7の導入及び導出に際しては、自動ウエハ移戦機(図示せず)が使用される。この自動ウエハ移戦機としては、半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス1内へウエハ7を挿入するローダ(図示せず)及びキャリアボックス1内からウエハ7を挿出するアンローダ(図示せず)が用いられる。

【0009】一方、近年の半導体産業の著しい技術革新により、ICの微細加工が可能となり、ますます集積度が高まった。それに伴い、塵埃の発生が問題になってきた。このため、発塵の原因となるものが制限されるようになり、自動ウエハ移載機においても、従来の移載方式から、ウエハフを半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス1から一枚ずつロボットで出し入れする方式に変ってきた。【0010】このロボットは、図3に示すフォーク8を 有し、このフォーク8を半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス1に収納された隣り合う2つのウエハフの間に挿入して上側に位置するウエハフを僅かに持上げ、外部に導出する。また、フォーク8を多段に配設して複数枚のウエ

#### [0011]

【考案が解決しようとする課題】ところで、前述のような半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス1では、成形時の収縮、離型等を考慮して余裕を持たせた寸法に設定されて

ハフを同時に導入、導出するものもある。

いるため、各リブ片5Aの間隔、対向する各支持用リブ 5の間隔はウエハ7の寸法に比べて大きく設定されてい る。さらに、各支持用リブ5の間隔は、ウエハ導入出口 2Aに向けて徐々に広がったテーパ状に成形されてい る。このため、ウエハフは半導体ウエハ用キャリアボッ クス 1 に挿入支持された状態で前後左右に移動できるよ うになっており、仮に前後、左右に移動すると、図4に 示すように、移動方向に傾いて水平度が悪くなる。そし て、ウエハフが傾いて水平度が悪くなると、隣り合うウ エハ7間の隙間寸法が不均一になり、フォーク8をウエ ハフの間に挿入する際に、フォーク8がウエハフに接触 して発塵したり、ウエハフを支持して導出する際にウエ ハフとリプ片5Aとが互いに接触し擦りながら移動して 発塵したりすることがある。そして、この発塵がウエハ 7の歩留り率の低下の原因になるという問題点がある。 【0012】本考案は以上の問題点に鑑みなされたもの で、ウエハを水平に正確に支持して導入又は導出の際の 発塵を抑えることができる薄板用支持容器を提供するこ とを目的とする。

#### [0013]

【課題を解決するための手段】本考案は前記課題を解決 するために、円盤状の薄板を多段にかつ等間隔に支持す べく多数のリブ片を多段に配設した支持用リブを並列に 相対向して備え、一方の開口部が前記薄板を導入又は導 出させる導入出口となる薄板用支持容器において、前記 リブ片を、前記薄板の導入又は導出が容易なように、そ の全長に亘って肉薄に成形してリブ片間隔を広くし、内 部に挿入された薄板の重心を通るその導入、導出方向に 直交する直線が前記相対向して備えられた各支持用リブ と交わる点より前記導入出口側の当該リブ片位置に、内 部に挿入された薄板を下側から支持する支持用凸部を設 けると共に、前記リブ片の最奥側に、薄板の挿入限度を 規制すると共に薄板を奥側から支持する奥側支持部を設 け、前記薄板が奥側支持部に当接して限度位置まで挿入 された状態で、この奥側支持部と前記支持用凸部とで薄 板を水平に支持することを特徴とする。

#### [0014]

【作用】前記構成により、導入部のリブ片を肉薄に成形 してリブ片間隔を広くすることで、薄板の導入又は導出 が容易になり、薄板と支持容器とが摩擦することがなく なる。

【0015】 <u>また、薄板の重心を通る直線と各支持用リプとの交点の導入出口側位置に設けられた支持用凸部と、リブ片の最奥側に設けられた奥側支持部とで、薄板を支持するので、薄板を水平に精度よく安定して支持することができ、ロボットのフォークを薄板間に接触することなく確実に挿入することができるようになる。</u>

#### [0016]

【実施例】以下、本考案の実施例を添付図面に基づいて 説明する。本考案の薄板用支持容器は、半導体ウェハ、 記憶ディスク、液晶板等の薄板を複数枚並列に支持する 容器である。以下、薄板として半導体ウエハを、薄板用 支持容器として半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックスを用い た場合を例に説明する。

#### 【0017】 [第1実施例]

本実施例の半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス10の全体 構成は前述した従来の半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス 1とほぼ同様である。具体的には、図1及び図5に示す ように、一方を開口して構成し半導体ウエハ11を導入 及び導出するウエハ導入出口12Aを有する筐体12 と、この筺体12の互いに対向した2枚の側板13.1 4の内側面にそれぞれ多段に設けられ、複数枚のウエハ 11を並列にかつ多段に収納支持する支持用リブ15と から構成されている。

【0018】筐体12は、対向する2つの側板13.1 4を上側連接板16と下側連接板17とで互いに接続支持して構成されている。この筐体12は、下側連接板17側を下にして縦に載置される。各側板13.14の下側には、筐体12を縦に載置したときに、内部に支持したウエハ11が水平になるように筐体2を支持するための基準面18Aとなる水平支持板部18が設けられている。ウエハ導入出口12Aはウエハ11を導入及び導出する開口部で、円形のウエハの最大直径よりも多少大きい程度の寸法に設定されている。

【0019】支持用リブ15は、側板13.14内側に一定間隔をおいて並列に設けられた多数のリブ片15Aから構成されている。この支持用リブ15は、ウエハ導入出口12A側に位置する導入部20と、この導入部20の奥側に位置する整合部21と、最奥側に位置しウエハ11の挿入限度を規制すると共にウエハ11を奥側から支持する奥側支持部22とから構成されている。導入部20では、ウエハ11をボックス内に導入するとき又は導出するときに、その導入又は導出が容易なように、リブ片15Aを従来技術と同じように、肉薄に成形してテーパの角度を鋭角にしリブ間隔を広くしている(図4参照)。

【0020】整合部21では、図6に示すように、リブ片15Aを肉厚に成形してテーパの角度を鈍角にし、リブ間隔を狭くしている。このリブ片15Aの厚さ(テーパ角)は、最奥まで挿入されたウエハ11が基準面18Aと平行になるように、設定されている。即ち、ウエハ11がボックス内に最奥まで挿入されると、このウエハ11は最大外径点25,25(図5参照)と奥側支持部22,22の4点で支持されるが、この4点で支持されたときにウエハ11が基準面18Aと平行になるように、リブ片15Aの上側面の成形位置が設定されている。なお、ウエハ11は円形であるので、ウエハ11の重心に対応する位置は最大外径点25、25になる。

【0021】さらに、リブ片15Aの下側面は、隣り合う2つのリブ片15Aの間隔を狭めてウエハ11の最大

外径部分でこのウエハ11の左右への移動が規制される 程度に設定されている。さらに、整合部21は前記最大 外径点25,25より僅かにウエハ導入出口12A側ま で設ける。

【0022】以上のように構成された半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス10にウエハ11を挿入するときは、このウエハ11がフォーク8(図3参照)で水平に支持され、挿入位置まで移動されてボックス10内へ挿入される。このときの位置は、整合部21のリブ片15Aの部分でウエハ11の最大外径分が接触しない高さに調整され、ウエハ11の挿入時にリブ片15Aに接触しないようになっている。

【0023】この位置を保った状態でウエハ11がボックス10内に奥側支持部22に当接するまで挿入される。挿入の際には、導入部20でのリプ片15Aの間隔が大きいので、容易に挿入される。ウエハ11が奥側支持部22に当接するまで挿入されると、フォーク8が僅かに下方へ移動してウエハ11は整合部21のリプ片15Aに載置される。この状態で、ウエハ11は奥側支持部22と整合部21とで支持され、このウエハ11の左右方向への移動がリプ片15Aの上下側面で、前後方向への移動が奥側支持部22でそれぞれ規制され、ウエハ11は水平度を保って載置され、各ウエハ11間の隙間寸法が均一になる。

【0024】ボックス10内に多段に収納されたウエハ11を取り出すときは、前記フォーク8を各ウエハ11の間に挿入する。このとき、各ウエハ11間の寸法も均一に水平支持されているので、各ウエハ11間の寸法も均一になっており、フォーク8がウエハ11に接触することがなる。フォーク8が奥まで挿入すると、このフォーク8が僅かに上方へ移動されてウエハ11を持上げる。そして、フォーク8が外部へ引出されてウエハ11が整合して、フォーク8が外部へ引出されてウエハ11が整合して、フォーク8によるウエハ11の最大外径部分が整合部21のリブ片15Aの下側面に接触しない程度に設定される。なお、ウエハ11の載置位置が多少ずれて接触したとしても整合部21は最大外径点25、25付近までしか成形されていないため、整合部21とウエハ11とが摩擦する部分は僅かな距離に過ぎない。

【0025】以上のように、本実施例の半導体ウェハ用キャリアボックス10では、ウエハ11を正確に水平支持することができるので、ウエハ11の導入、導出の際に、各部の接触による発塵を防止することができる。

【0026】また、フォーク8を挿入するときにもウエハ11とフォーク8とが接触することがなくなり、ウエハ11の破損、作業ラインの停止等の発生を確実に防止することができる。

#### 【0027】[第2実施例]

本実施例の半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス31の全体 構成は、前記第1実施例と同様である。本実施例におい

ては、図7に示すように、支持用リブ32の構成を異な らせている。即ち、支持用リブ32を構成するリブ片3 3は全体を肉薄に成形され、リブ片33の間隔はその全 長に亘って広くしている。そして、図フに示すように、 リブ片33に、ウエハ11を水平に支持する支持用凸部 3.4が設けられている。この支持用凸部3.4は最大外径 点25、25の近傍(多少ウエハ導入出口12A側) に、即ち内部に挿入されたウエハ11の重心を通るその 導入、導出方向に直交する直線が、相対向して備えられ た各支持用リブ32と交わる点よりウェハ導入出口12 A側のリブ片33位置に設けられ、この2つの支持用凸 部34と奥側支持部22とでウエハ11が4点支持され る。支持用凸部34の大きさは、最大外径点25、25 近傍でウエハ11を支持できればよいため、僅かな幅 (リブ片15Aの長手方向への幅) に設けても、ある程 度大きな幅に設けてもよい。

【0028】この支持用凸部34はくさび状に成形され、その上側面が水平になるように、かつ対向する2つの支持用凸部34の高さが同一になるようになっている。さらに、この支持用凸部34の高さは臭側支持部22の高さと同一になっている。これにより、ウエハ11は奥側支持部22と支持用凸部34とで4点支持された状態で、多少左右にずれても、水平状態が維持される。【0029】以上の構成により、前記第1実施例と同様

【0030】なお、前記各実施例では、薄板として半導体ウエハ11を用いた場合を例に説明したが、これに限らず、アルミニウム製の記憶ディスクやガラス製の液晶板等を収納支持する支持容器の場合にも、前記同様の作用、効果を奏することができる。

の作用、効果を奏することができる。

【0031】また、前記各実施例では、ウエハ11を奥側支持部22を含む4点で支持するように構成したが、この奥側支持部22を設けずに、互いに平行する部分(第1実施例における導入部20と整合部21に対応する部分)だけで構成した場合にも、前記同様の作用、効果を奏することができる。この場合、第1実施例では整合部21でウエハ11を4点支持することになる。第2実施例では支持用凸部34を4ヵ所に設けることになる。これは特に液晶板等の4角形のものを支持する場合に有効である。

【0032】第1実施例では、整合部21を最大外径点25,25より僅かにウエハ導入出口12A側まで設けたが、ウエハ導入出口12A側へ大きく設けてもよい。 【0033】また、整合部21のリブ片15Aを肉厚にする部分を、リブ片15Aの長手方向全域に設けたが、最大外径点25,25の近傍にだけ設けてもよい。

【0034】第2実施例では、くさび状の支持用凸部3

4を設けたが、図8に示すように、突起状の支持用凸部 35としてもよい。この場合にも第2実施例同様の作用、効果を奏することができる。

【0035】また、支持用凸部34は片側(リブ片15Aの上側面)にだけ設けたが、両側(リブ片15Aの対向する上側面と下側面)に設けてもよい。この場合は、ボックス10を横にして(ウエハ導入出口12Aを上にして)奥側支持部22側から各ウエハ11を押し上げて取り出すときにウエハ11が振れず、取出しが容易になる。

【0036】また、支持用凸部としては、図9に示すように、リプ片33の最奥部に下方へ向けて傾斜した形状の支持用凸部36としてもよい。この支持用凸部36の取り付け位置は、最大外径点25、25付近でも全体でもよい。この場合、支持用凸部36でウエハ11の下側面が支持されることで、ウエハ11の左右へのずれが規制され、ウエハ11が傾くのを防止することができる。

#### [0037]

【考案の効果】以上詳述したように、本考案の薄板用支持容器によれば、薄板を水平に正確に支持することができるようになり、薄板の導入又は導出の際に、薄板と容器との接触等による発塵を抑えることができるようになる。

#### 【図面の簡単な説明】

【図1】本考案に係る半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックスを示す一部破断斜視図である。

【図2】従来の半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックスを示す 一部破断斜視図である。

【図3】フォークを示す平面図である。

【図4】従来のキャリアボックスにおけるウエハの載置 状態を示す部分断面図である。

【図5】図1の半導体ウエハ用キャリアポックスの横断 面図である。

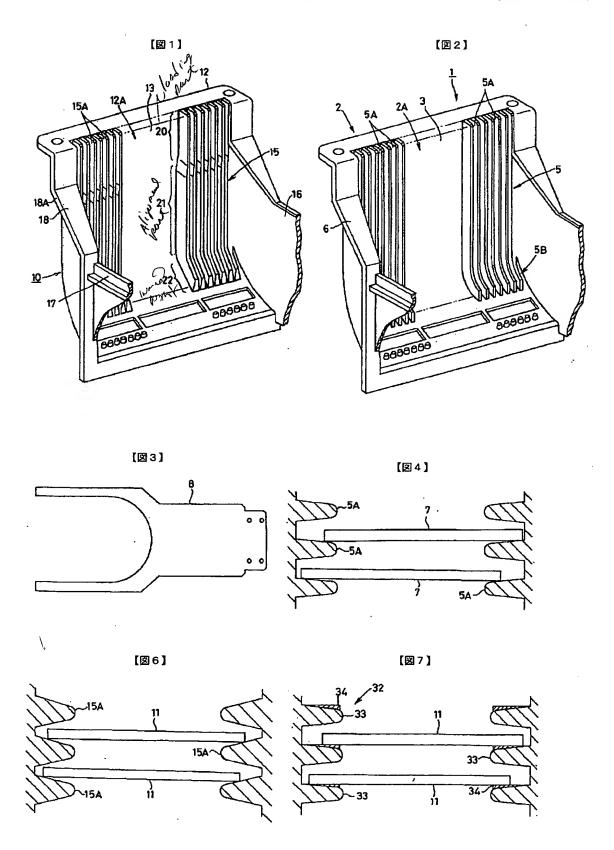
【図6】第1実施例に係るキャリアボックスにおけるウエハの載置状態を示す部分断面図である。

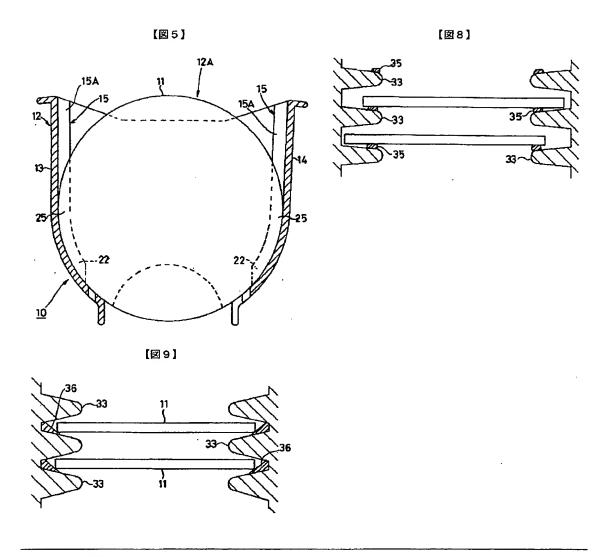
【図7】第2実施例に係るキャリアボックスにおけるウェハの載置状態を示す部分断面図である。

【図8】第2実施例の変形例を示す部分断面図である。 【図9】第2実施例の他の変形例を示す部分断面図である。

#### 【符号の説明】

10…半導体ウエハ用キャリアボックス、11…半導体ウエハ、12…筐体、12A…ウエハ導入出口、13,14…側板、15…支持用リブ、15A…リブ片、18…水平支持板部、18A…基準面、20…導入部、21…整合部、22…奥側支持部。





フロントページの続き

(51) Int. C1. 6 HO1L 21/304 341 C 21/306

識別記号 庁内整理番号

FΙ

技術表示箇所

```
(19) [Country of Issuance] Japanese Patent Office (JP)
(12) [Type of Gazette] Gazette for New Design idea for Practical Application
(Y2)
(11) [Official Application Number] Jitsu-Ko-Hei 08-7637
(24) (44) [Date of Official Announcement] March 4, 1996
(54) [Name of Invention] Support container for Thin plates
(51) [International Patent Classification 6th Edition]
   H01L 21/68
   B65D 85/00
                     H 0330-3E
        85/86
   H01L 21/304
                 341 C
        21/306
[FI]
   B65D 85/38
                     R 0330-3E
   H01L 21/306
                     K
[Number of Claims] 1
[Total Number of Pages] 6
(21) [Application Number] Jitsu-Gan-Hei 04-60861
(22) [Date of Application] August 31, 1992
(65) [Publication Number] Jitsu-Kai-Hei 06-26263
(43) [Date of Publication] April 8, 1994
(71) [Name of Applicant]
[Identification Number] 000140890
[Name] Kakizaki Mfg. Co., Ltd.
[Address] 1-18-2 Nishi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku, Tokyo, JAPAN
(72) [Name of Inventor]
[Name] Takemi KAKIZAKI
[Address]
             1-18-2
                       Nishi-Ikebukuro,
                                            Toshima-ku,
                                                            Tokyo,
                                                                      JAPAN
c/o KAKIZAKI Mfg. Co., Ltd.
(74) [Name of Agent]
[Patent Attorney]
[Name] Nobuyuki KUDO (and other 2 patent attorneys)
[Examiner] Shigehiro TOYONAGA
(56) [Cited References]
(2) [Cited Reference] Toku-Kai-Hei 02-209746 (JP, A)
```

[Cited Reference] Jitsu-Kai-Sho 61-175614 (JP, U)

[Scope of the Claim for the New Design for Practical Use]

[What is Claimed: 1] A support container for thin plates characterized in that such a container has support rib segments arranged in such a way that they face one another and are comprised of multi-layers so that disk-shaped thin plates can be supported in many layers, and in an equal distance from one thin sheet from another; that the support container, where one end of the opening part thereof is arranged to allow said thin plates to be loaded or unloaded, can allow said rib segments to be arranged in an increased space throughout the entire length of the thin sheet and formed thinly so that said thin plates can be easily loaded or unloaded, wherein a support convex part that supports the thin plates from downward, which are inserted internally from the point, where the straight line passing toward the direction of the loading/lead-out diagonally through the center of gravity of the internally inserted thin plates meets individual support ribs that are arranged to face one another, to one side of said rib segments of said loading/lead-out part; and that the inner most side of said rib segments has a inner most support part, which controls the insertion depth limit of the thin plates by supporting the thin plates from the inner location thereof, wherein as said thin plates contact the inner most support part and are inserted to the limit point, which allows the container to horizontally support the thin plates by this inner most support part and said support convex part.

#### Detailed Explanation

[Detailed Explanation of the Invention]
[0001]

[Applications in Industrial Purposes] The present invention relates to a support container for thin plates, being able to support a plurality of thin plates such as semi-conductor wafers at a certain space in multiple layers in a sustainable fashion, which is used for processes that are applicable to a plurality of said thin plates such as storage, transportation, cleaning, etching, and drying.

[0002]

[Existing Technique] As a support container for thin plates in order to process, for example, storage, cleaning, and etching, wherein a plurality of thin plates can be stored, carrier box for semi-conductor wafers, where thin plates are represented by semi-conductor wafers, carrier box for semi-conductor wares, has been known. Illustration will follow regarding this carrier box for semi-conductor wafers 1 with reference to Figure 2. Figure 2 is a partial cut out view, showing only one internal side of the facing pair of sides of carrier box for semi-conductors 1.

[0003] The carrier box for semi-conductor wafers 1 is formed to be open at one end, being conceptually comprised of a body 2 having a wafer input/output opening. 2A for a wafer 7 (see also Figure 4), and a support rib 5 that are arranged in a plurality of layers inside the pair of side boards 3 facing each other inside the body 2.

[0004] Individual support ribs 5 are comprised of a plurality of rib segments 5A that are arranged in a parallel manner at a constant space on the side board 3. The rib segment 5A is formed to be thin in its cross-section, and adjacent rib segments are separated at a wide space.

[0005] The inner most point of each support rib 5 has the inner most supporting part 5B, which is formed in such a way that individual ribs are internally wound, wherein the insertion depth of an inserted wafer 7 can be controlled and fixed to a certain position.

[0006] On one side (see also the left figure of Figure 2) of the body 2 is a horizontal support board part 6 that supports the body 2 with maintaining the internally inserted wafer 7 horizontal when the body 2 is set up in a vertical position (which means the state where the internally inserted wafer 7 can be horizontally kept).

[0007] With regard to the existing carrier box for semi-conductor wafers 1 having the construction just as described above, a plurality of wafers 7 are to be supported in a parallel and multi-layer fashion, and they are batched as a box 1 for the processes such as a cleaning process where the entire box is to be submerged into the cleaning solution.

[0008] And an automated wafer conveyer (no figure is provided) is used for loading and unloading the wafers 7 to the carrier box 1. As such an automated wafer conveyer, a loader (no figure is provided) that inserts a wafer 7 into

the carrier box for semi-conductor wafers 1, and an unloader (no figure is provided) that feeds a wafer 7 to the carrier box 1 are to be used.

[0009] On the other hand, due to the amazing technological innovations in the semi-conductor industry, minute processing of integrated circuits (IC's) can be achieved, which in turns has increased the density of integration more and more. Along the line with the discussion made above, generated dust has come to draw attention as problems. For this reason, what might generate dust has been regulated; on the automated carrier, as well, the conventional conveyer method has been replaced with the method whereby a wafer 7 is to be fed in and out the carrier box for semi-conductor wafers 1 one wafer by one with the assistance of utilizing robots.

[0010] The robot has a forklift 8 as described in Figure 3, inserts the forklift 8 between adjacent two (2) wafers 7 stored in the carrier box for semi-conductor wafers 1, and lift the top side wafer 7 slightly to get it unloaded externally. Moreover, there is another type that a forklift 8 is arranged in a multi-layer manner, which allows a plurality of wafers 7 can be simultaneously loaded and unloaded.

[0011]

[Issues that the Invention Is Trying To Solve] Incidentally, the carrier box 1 for semi-conductor wafers just as described above is designed with larger size, taking into consideration the contraction and release among other things at the timing of forming; thus, the space between each rib segment 5A, and the space between individual support ribs 5 that face one another are set to a relatively large dimension, compared with the dimension of the wafer 7. Furthermore, the space between individual support ribs 5 is formed in a taper-like manner where the space becomes larger toward the wafer loading/unloading opening 2A. For this reason, the wafer 7 can be moved back and forth, right and left with its state being inserted and supported into the carrier box 1 for semi-conductor wafers; if it is moved back and forth, right and left, just as described in Figure 4, the wafer gets inclined in the direction of movement, thus reduced flatness. Now that the flatness is being reduced due to the inclination of the wafer 7, the space dimension of the adjacent wafers 7 become inconsistent; when the forklift 8 extends to the wafers 7, contact between the forklift 8 and wafers 7 might generate dust, and movement with contact and friction of the wafers 7 and rib segments 5A in an attempt to introduce and unloading the wafers could generate dust, as well. Consequently,

[0013]

[0014]

the resulting dust could be one of the causes of the problem of reducing the yield rate of the wafers 7.

[0012] The present invention is pondered upon the problems as discussed above, and aims at providing a support container for thin plates that can support the wafers in an accurate and horizontal position, and that can reduce the generation of dust when the wafers are loaded and unloaded.

[Means to Solve the Issues] In order to solve the issues described above, the present invention is characterized in that such a container has support rib segments arranged in such a way that they face one another and are comprised of multi-layers so that disk-shaped thin plates can be supported in many layers, and in an equal distance from one thin sheet from another; that the support container, where one end of the opening part thereof is arranged to allow said thin plates to be introduced or unloaded, can allow said rib segments to be arranged in an increased space throughout the entire length of the thin sheet and formed thinly so that said thin plates can be easily introduced or unloaded, wherein a support convex part that supports the thin plates from downward, which are inserted internally from the point, where the straight line passing toward the direction of the loading/lead-out diagonally through the center of gravity of the internally inserted thin plates meets individual support ribs that are arranged to face one another, to one side of said rib segments of said loading/lead-out part; and that the inner most side of said rib segments has a inner most support part, which controls the insertion depth limit of the thin plates by supporting the thin plates from the inner location thereof, wherein as said thin plates contact the inner most support part and are inserted to the limit point, which allows the container to horizontally support the thin plates by this inner most support part and said support convex part.

[Effects] By the construction described above, the rib segments of the loading part can be formed thin to allow the space between rib segments to be larger, providing easy loading and unloading of the thin plates, thus eliminated friction between the thin plates and support container.

[0015] Additionally, since the thin plates are supported by the support convex part that supports the thin plates from downward, which are inserted internally from the point, where the straight line passing toward the direction of the loading/unloading diagonally through the center of gravity of the internally

inserted thin plates meets individual support ribs that are arranged to face one another, to one side of said rib segments of said loading/unloading part, and the inner most support part arranged at the inner most of the rib segments, the thin plates can be supported in an accurate and horizontal manner, ensuring a complete insertion without having the forks of a robot contact the in-between of the thin plates.

[0016]

[Demonstrated Example] Illustration will follow regarding demonstrated examples according to the present invention with the assistance of the attached drawings. The support container for thin plates according to the present invention is a container that can support a plurality of thin plates such as semi-conductor wafers, storage disks, and liquid crystal panels, among other things in a parallel manner. In the following illustration, semi-conductor wafers will be used as an example of thin plates, and a carrier box for semi-conductor wafers will be used as an example of the support container for thin plates.

[0017] [The First Demonstration]

The overall construction of the carrier box for semi-conductor wafers 10 according to the present demonstration example is mostly the same with that of the above-mentioned carrier box for semi-conductor wafers 1. Specifically speaking, just as described in Figures 1 and 5, it is formed to be open at one end, being comprised of a body 12 having a wafer loading/unloading part 12A for a wafer 11, and a support rib 15 that are arranged in a plurality of layers inside the pair of side boards 13 and 14 facing each other inside the body 12. [0018] The body 12 is constructed in such a way that the facing side boards 13 and 14 are connected and supported via a top articulated board 16 and a bottom articulated board 17 one another. The body 12 is to be placed vertically with the bottom of the bottom articulated board 17 being the base. The bottom parts of individual side boards 13 and 14 has a horizontal support board part 18 that serves as a base level 18A for supporting the body 2 to have the wafers 11 horizontal when the body is placed vertically. The wafer loading and unloading part 12A is an opening part that loads and unloads the wafers 12, and is designed to be a little larger in dimension than the maximal diameter of the disk wafers. [0019] Individual support ribs 15 are comprised of a plurality of rib segments 15A that are arranged in a parallel manner at a constant space on the inside of the side boards 13 and 14. The support rib 15 is comprised of a loading part

20 located on the side of the wafers' loading and unloading part 12A, an alignment part 21 located deep inside of the loading part 20, and the inner support part 22 located at the inner most position, which regulates the insertion limit of the wafers 11 as well as supports the wafers 11 from the inner position. In order for the loading and unloading of the wafers 11 to be easy in and out the box, the loading part 20 is formed to be thin, just as can be seen in the prior art, with its taper forming an acute angle to provide a wider space between the ribs (see also Figure 4).

[0020] Just as Figure 6 shows, at the alignment part 21 are the rib segments 15A that is formed to be thick with its taper forming an dull angle, providing a narrower space between the ribs. The thickness of the rib segments 15A (an angle of the taper) is set in such a way that the wafers 11 that has been completely inserted to the inner most position comes in parallel with the base level 18A. Therefore, when the wafers 11 are inserted to the inner most position in the box, these wafers 11 are supported by four (4) points, that is, the maximal outer diameter points 25 and 25(ref. to fig. 5), along with the inner support parts 22 and 22; when the wafers 11 are supported by the four (4) points, the alignment of the top surface of the rib segments 15A is set so that the wafers 11 come in parallel with the base level 18A. Incidentally, since the wafers 11 are disks, the position that corresponds to the center of gravity of the wafers 11 should be the maximal outer diameter points 25 and 25.

[0021] In addition, the bottom part of the rib segments 15A is designed to be allowed to have such a reasonable space that the movement of the wafers 11 to the right and left can be regulated at the maximal outer diameter of the wafers 11 by decreasing the space between adjacent two (2) rib segments 15A. Moreover, the alignment part 21 is to be extended from said maximal outer diameter 25 and 25 slightly toward said wafers' loading and unloading part 12A.

[0022] When inserting the wafers 11 to the carrier box 10 for semi-conductor wafers constructed in the aforementioned manner, these wafers 11 are to be supported by the forklift 8 (see also Figure 3) horizontally, get moved to the insertion point, and eventually inserted to the inside of the box 10. In this case, the height of the rib segments 15A part of the alignment part 21 is arranged so as not to contact the maximal outer diameter of the wafers 11, and the rib segments 15A are arranged not to be contacted when the wafers 11 are inserted.

[0023] With this alignment being maintained, the wafers 11 are inserted to the inside of the box 10 until they contact the inner support part 22. Since the space of the rib segments 15A is large at the loading part 20, insertion can be performed easily. When the wafers 11 are inserted to contact the inner support part 22, the forklift 8 moves downward slightly, allowing the wafers 11 to be placed to the rib segments 15A of the alignment part 21. At this state, the wafers 11 are supported by the inner support part 22 and the alignment part 21, their movement to right and left being regulated by the top and bottom sides of the rib segments 15A while their movement back and forth is regulated by the inner support part 22, respectively; providing horizontal positioning of the wafers' 11, and allowing the interval distance between individual wafers 11 to be uniform.

[0024] When extracting the wafers 11 that have been stored in multiple layers inside the box 10, insert said forklift 8 between individual wafers 11. In this case, since each wafer 11 is maintained to be horizontal position, thus uniform space distance between individual wafers 11, the forklift 8 never contacts the wafers 11. When the forklift 8 penetrates to the inner position, it gets moved slightly upward to lift the wafers 11. Then, the forklift 8 gets extracted externally, followed by the wafers 11 being unloaded. In this case, the amount of upward movement of the wafers 11 by the forklift 8 is designed in such a way that the maximal outer diameter part of these wafers' 11 should not contact the bottom surface of the rib segments 15A of the alignment part 21.

Incidentally, even when the wafers 11 were positioned astray causing contact, the alignment part 21 is formed up until the maximal diameter points 25 and 25, so the fricative part between the alignment part 21 and the wafers 11 would be nothing more than an infinitesimal distance.

[0025] Just as discussed above, since the carrier box for semi-conductor wafers 10 according to this demonstrated example can support the wafers 11 in an accurate and horizontal position, dust generation due to loading and unloading of the wafer 11s and contact in various locations can be prevented.

[0026] In addition, even when inserting the fork 8, the wafer 11s and the fork 8 never contacts each other, ensuring complete prevention of occurrences such as damages to the wafer 11s, and down of production among other things.

[0027] [The Second Demonstration]

The overall construction of the carrier box for semi-conductor wafers 31 according to the present demonstration example is the same with that of the

above-mentioned first demonstration example. In this 2nddemonstration example, just as Figure 7 shows, the construction of the support ribs 32 is different. In other words, the overall rib segments 33, comprising the support ribs 32, are formed to be thin, and the distance between the rib segments 33 is wider at large. And, just as Figure 7 shows, the rib segments 33 have a support convex part 34 to maintain the wafers 11 horizontal position. This support convex part 32 is to be placed in the neighborhood (slightly toward the wafers' loading and unloading part 12A) of the maximal outer diameter points 25 and 25, in other words, the position where the straight line passing toward the direction of the loading/unloading diagonally through the center of gravity of the internally inserted wafers 11 meets individual support ribs 32 to one side of said rib segments 33 of said loading/unloading part; these two (2) support convex parts 34 and the inner support part 22 collaboratively support the wafers 11 at the four (4) points. Since the support convex part 34 is sufficient as far as the wafers 11 can be supported in the neighborhood of the maximal outer diameter points 25 and 25, even a slight width (width toward the major length of the rib segments 15A) will do. So will a relatively large width.

[0028] This <u>support convex part 34</u> is formed in a wedge-like shape, whose top surface is to be horizontal while the facing pair of the <u>support convex part 34</u> should have the same height. In addition, this <u>support convex part 34</u> has the same height with that of the inner support part 22. Therefore, the wafers (1 can be supported by the four (4) points, that is, the inner support part 22 and the <u>support convex part 34</u>, wherein a slight movement to the right or left does not affect the horizontal horizontal stability.

[0029] By the construction as described above, the similar effects can be achieved just as the first demonstration example above.

[0030] Incidentally, in each demonstration example above, semi-conductor wafers 11 are used to exemplify the thin plates; however, not limited to these, similar effects can be achieved even with other support containers for, for example, aluminum-memory storage disks, glass-made container for liquid crystal memory boards.

[0031] Moreover, in said individual demonstration examples, the wafers 11 are to be supported by the four (4) points including the inner support part 22; however, without arranging this inner support part 22, but a construction by preparing only parts that are parallel to each other (the parts corresponding to the loading part 20 and the alignment parts 21 in the first demonstration

example) can achieve similar effects as shown above. In this case, the wafers 11 would be supported by the four (4) points, the alignment part 21. In the second demonstration example, four (4) of the <u>support convex part 34</u> would be necessary. This is particularly effective when rectangular shapes are to be supported such as liquid crystal boards.

[0032] In the first demonstration example, the alignment part 21 is arranged slightly toward the wafers' loading and unloading side from the maximal outer diameter points 25 and 25; however, this could be arranged larger to the side of the wafers' loading and unloading part 12A.

[0033] Moreover, the parts where the rib segments 15A are to be thick in the alignment part 21 is directed to the overall major length of the rib segments 15A; however, these could be arranged within the neighborhood of the maximal outer diameter points 25 and 25.

[0034] In the second demonstration example, a wedge-shaped support convex part 34 is arranged; however, just as Figure 8 shows, a projective support convex part 35 will do, as well. In this case, as well, the similar effects can be achieved as the second demonstration example.

[0035] Furthermore, the support convex part 34 is arranged on one side (on the top surface of the rib segments 15A); however, it could be arranged on both sides (on the top and bottom surfaces facing the rib segments 15A). In this case, when taking out the individual wafers 11 from the inner support part 22 after laying down the box 10 (which means that the wafers' loading and unloading part 12A faces up), the wafers 11 does not tremble, providing an easy extraction.

[0036] In addition, as a <u>support convex part 34</u>, just as shown in Figure 9, a shape that inclines downward the inner most point of the rib segments 33 as a <u>support convex part 36</u> could be used, as well. The positioning of this support convex part 36 could be either within the neighborhood of the maximal outer diameter points 25 and 25, or entire one. In this case, since the bottom surface of the wafers 11 is supported by the support convex part 36, top of the wafers 11 comes close to the bottom surface of the rib segments 33, regulating the horizontal movement of the wafers 11, thus preventing the wafers 11 from being inclined.

[0037]

[Effects of the Invention] Just as discussed above, by using the support container for thin plates, thin plates can be supported in an accurate and

#### #95875 v1 - Translation of Large JP patent

horizontal location, and when loading or unloading the thin plates, generation of dust due to, for example, contact between the thin plate and container, can be reduced.

#### Description of Drawings

[Simplified Illustration of the Drawings]

[Figure 1] A partial cut out view, showing the carrier box for semi-conductor wafers related to the present invention.

[Figure 2] A partial cut out view, showing the carrier box for semi-conductor wafers of the existing type.

[Figure 3] A flat view, showing a forklift.

[Figure 4] A partial cross-sectional diagram, showing the position where a wafer is placed in the carrier box of the existing type.

[Figure 5] A horizontal cross-sectional diagram of the carrier box for semi-conductor wafers as illustrated in Figure 1.

[Figure 6] A partial cross-sectional diagram, showing the position where a wafer is placed in the carrier box in the first demonstration.

[Figure 7] A partial cross-sectional diagram, showing the position where a wafer is placed in the carrier box in the second demonstration.

[Figure 8] A partial cross-sectional diagram, showing a variation example of the second demonstration.

[Figure 9] A partial cross-sectional diagram, showing another variation example of the second demonstration.

[Description of the Numbered Items]

10 --- Carrier box for semi-conductor wafers.

11 --- Semi-conductor wafer.

12 --- Body.

12A --- Loading/unloading of the wafer.

13, 14 --- Side board.

15 --- Support rib.

15A --- Rib segment.

18 --- Horizontal support board part.

18A --- Base level.

20 --- Loading part.

21 --- Alignment part.

#95875 v1 - Translation of Large JP patent

22 --- Inner most support part.